



# A CHURCH FORMED: CHILDREN OF THE DAY

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**SERIES: EPIC**

In the summer of 1992, I traveled to Bulgaria to teach the Scriptures to several new churches that had been established after the fall of the Berlin Wall three years prior. The new believers that populated these new churches were passionate about Jesus, but many of them had some strange ideas about theology and church life. I was, at first, pained for these churches until it dawned on me that they were much like the churches the apostle Paul established in the first century: their newly converted members had much to learn. Because the first century churches were new and were prone to wander off course, Paul wrote letters to them to instruct and correct them. If the first century churches had it all together, the letters of Paul, if he wrote them at all, would read much differently than they do. And we would be the poorer for it. Such thoughts encouraged me as I taught in what at first appeared to me as dysfunctional churches.

We turn, then, in *EPIC*, to the letters of Paul, which follow the four gospels and the book of Acts in the New Testament. The four gospels feature the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whom the authors identify as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, who fulfills the story of the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole and the story of Israel in particular. The book of Acts continues where the gospels left off, telling the story of the early church, which is Israel both renewed and enlarged to embrace Gentiles as well as Jews. If the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament tell us “the astonishing story of God and the world,” as we have deemed it, then the letters of Paul, written in the middle years of the first century, concern the implications of that story for the new worshiping communities that had been established around the Mediterranean. Paul wanted the churches not only to know the story of Christ; he also wanted them, as the body of Christ, to live the story of Christ.

We inhabit a different time and place than the communities that Paul wrote to, but biblically speaking, we inhabit the same age, which was inaugurated by the advent of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The letters of Paul, then, speak directly to our worshiping community and to each of us. Many of us who are part of Peninsula Bible Church may know more than those in the first century and those who made up the churches in Eastern Europe that I visited, but we,

too, have much to learn about how the *EPIC* story of the Scriptures relates to the way we live here and now. Know the story; live the story.

To get a flavor for the letters of Paul as a whole, and for how they build on the overall story of the Scriptures, we’ll use three of his letters: his first letter, 1 Thessalonians; one of his middle letters, Ephesians; and his last letter, 2 Timothy.

## **An old flame**

As humans, we live in the present, but we also remember the past and wonder about the future. The past, the present, and the future: they’re all related, aren’t they? How we remember the past and how we think about the future influences how we live in the present. For example, if in the past you experienced something painful, you may wonder whether more pain awaits you in the future and therefore live protectively in the present. If in the past you experienced something pleasant, you may hope for a similar experience in the future and take pains, in the present, to create such an experience.

In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s great American novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the protagonist, Jay Gatsby, goes to extraordinary lengths to convince an old flame, Daisy, to leave her husband and return to him. His memory of the past leads him to live in the present in a way that he might realize a desired future. His neighbor, Nick Carraway, warns Gatsby, “You can’t repeat the past.” An incredulous Gatsby replies, “Can’t repeat the past? Why of course you can!”<sup>1</sup> How we remember the past and how we think about the future matters a great deal.

Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, reminds them of their past, instructs them in the present, and points them toward their future. How then, do we live in the present, remember the past, and anticipate the future?

## **Remembering the past**

1 Thessalonians 1:4-10:

**<sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. <sup>7</sup>And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup>The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, <sup>9</sup>for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.**

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the gospel, or good news, came to them. What had Paul told the Thessalonians about the gospel when he visited them? He explained to them and gave evidence that “the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead,” and he proclaimed to them, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah” (Acts 17:3). When Paul writes to the Corinthians about the gospel, he writes of the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus, in his death and resurrection, defeated evil (Satan, sin, and death) so that all the nations, not just Israel, could be liberated from captivity to evil and restored to God. After all, the nations, prior to God's call of Abraham, and prior to the nation of Israel that proceeded from Abraham, rejected whom Paul calls the “living and true God.” The nations also needed to return to God. In fact, God called Israel to bring the nations back to him, and though on one level Israel failed; on another level it birthed the Messiah, who drew onto himself the destiny of Israel to bless the nations.

Jesus, in his death, resurrection, and ascension/enthronement, has defeated the dark powers and is now Lord of the world. The quintessential gospel proclamation is, “Jesus is Lord” (Philippians 2:5-11). In the world that the Thessalonians inhabited, the gospel that Paul preached upstaged the gospel preached by Rome, which proclaimed, “Caesar is Lord.” Some opponents of the gospel in Thessalonica complained to city authorities that followers of Jesus were “defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus” (Acts 17:7).

In our world, the gospel upstages the gospel of the

individual. Who is Lord: the individual or Jesus? If you think you are the master of your own fate, try sizing up your chances against death. No, you're not Lord. You're not in control. You are neither the master of your fate nor the captain of your soul. One day, unless Jesus returns beforehand, you're going to die. Better to submit to the one who's triumphed over death, the one we'll all have to answer to at the end of our years.

## The power of the Holy Spirit

If it were just a war of words, “Jesus is Lord” vs. “Caesar is Lord,” Paul's words probably wouldn't have convinced the Thessalonians. However, Paul observes, “our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.” The Holy Spirit accompanied the message, making it a powerful one and persuading the Thessalonians to believe it, even though it posited some hard-to-believe propositions, most particularly the resurrection and universal lordship of a Jewish peasant who was rejected by his people and executed by Rome. In many cases, when the apostles preached the gospel, the Holy Spirit authenticated it with powerful signs and wonders (Romans 15:18-19). The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons who make up the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Spirit, though present from the moment of creation, became active in a new and more powerful way after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). The Thessalonians accepted the gospel message “not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The gospel message is no less preposterous in our day, although it is, perhaps, with the perspective of the years, easier to believe if for no other reason than the fact that the bodily resurrection of Christ is the best explanation for the rise of the early church. Still, few people are persuaded to give their allegiance to Jesus based on the evidence alone. It takes the Holy Spirit, as Jesus said, to penetrate the hearts of people (John 16:8).

After hearing the gospel, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, the Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” The essential human problem is idolatry, a turning away from the true God in order to worship whatever we want. It's not a question of whether we worship; it's a question of who, or what, we worship. If you doubt that we are creatures of worship, watch the line that forms outside the Apple store in downtown Palo Alto the next time a new product is released, or attend a rock concert and watch the response, or watch fans at a National Football League game live or die by what players do, whom they have no connection to whatsoever. The essence of what the Scriptures call “repentance,” then, is a

turning away from false gods, which have no power, and a turning to the true God, who acts powerfully in behalf of those who believe in his Son. The Thessalonians did what Jesus told the Galileans to do: they repented and believed the good news (Mark 1:15).

## **The time you first believed**

If you are a believer, think back, then, to the time you first believed. The gospel, in some form, came to you. At some point, you believed it. Or, perhaps after initially believing it, at some point you had second thoughts, and then you believed anew. Whenever and however you believed, you believed. Know this, however, you did not believe on your own. You had some help. At some point, the gospel came to you with the power of the Holy Spirit, even if you can't pinpoint a time or place and faith was something more like a slow dawning than an instantaneous decision. No, you probably didn't understand the gospel fully. (Who among us ever does, for that matter?) But something told you it's true. You experienced something—something not necessarily divorced from intellectual ascent, but something that transcended intellectual ascent nonetheless. You probably couldn't name what you experienced at the time. That's all right; Paul names it for you. You experienced the power of the Holy Spirit—perhaps all by yourself one day, perhaps in a community of God's people.

When I was a high school junior (almost forty years ago now), a friend invited me to a Bible study. Because he had already introduced me to some good-looking girls who were also part of the Bible study, I accepted the invitation. I was riding to the gathering in a car with three other boys when one of them asked me, "What do you know about the Bible?" I answered, "Two things. There's an Old Testament and a New Testament." When we arrived at the church, the youth pastor said, "Open to Ephesians." I thought to myself, "What?" Someone seated next to me handed me a Bible and opened it to Ephesians. Questions were asked. Answers were given. And I had no idea what anyone was talking about. By the time it was over, I'm not sure I knew anything more about the Bible than when I came, except that it contained something called "Ephesians."

But I knew this: I experienced something then and there (in addition to the presence of good-looking girls) that made me want to return, even if I couldn't name it. So I returned the next week, and in the weeks that followed. At some point, the gospel, or some version of it, was articulated, and one night (December 3, 1973, to be precise), I formally accepted it, though I think I believed it before then. The first night I came, and in the weeks

that followed, I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. And my experience of the Holy Spirit changed not only the course of my life but also my entire destiny.

Perhaps for some of you, however, Paul isn't talking about your past. You haven't yet believed the gospel. You haven't yet bowed before the King. You're still trying to make life work on your own. Perhaps you haven't really heard the gospel before. Perhaps you've heard it and rejected it. Perhaps it came with power but you had your guard up. In any event, it's coming to you now, in the present: Jesus is Lord. Turn to the true God, who acts powerfully in behalf of those who believe in his Son.

Remembering our first experience of the gospel leads us not, like *Gatsby*, to repeat the past but to live in the present in a powerful way.

## **Living in the present**

When God created humans, he created them male and female. The first thing to be said about being human, in almost all cases, is that someone is either male or female. What's the first thing we want to know about a baby who is either about to be born or has been born? We want to know: is it a boy, or is it a girl?" The first thing that got distorted, then, when sin entered the world, was human sexuality. In Genesis 3, the first man and the first woman, suddenly aware of their nakedness, began hiding from God and from each other. The second thing to get affected by sin was human relationships—beginning with family relationships. In Genesis 4, Cain, after becoming angry because God refused his offering, killed his brother Abel. The human story from then on is nothing if not a sordid tale of sexual confusion and abuse, relational tension and violence.

The Thessalonians, though, have believed the gospel. They have turned from false gods to worship the true God. Worship renews the image of God in humans. As we worship the true God, we are renewed as men and women. Moreover, the gospel creates a new family that transcends blood lines. All those who believe in Jesus are part of the family of God. As we worship the true God, we are not only renewed in our humanity, we also learn to honor the image of God in other humans, especially those in our family, the family of God.

Not surprisingly, then, when Paul writes to the Thessalonians about how they should live in the present, he writes about their sexuality and about how they should relate to one another.



## Restoration of sexuality

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8:

**<sup>3</sup>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup>that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup>not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; <sup>6</sup>and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. <sup>7</sup>For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.**

It must first be noted that virtually everyone believes that “sexual immorality” should be avoided. Moreover, virtually everyone believes that “you should learn to control your own body”—that is, your sexual desires—at least to some degree. Not many people are advocates for pedophilia or bestiality, for example. Not many would say, at least in our culture, that someone is entitled to as many spouses as he or she wants. Not many would say that couples should be free to have sex in public (although a substantially higher percentage defends the propriety of watching couples have sex on a screen). All people consider at least some expressions of sexuality out of bounds. Although everyone believes in boundaries, not everyone agrees on what those boundaries are, of course.

How, then, would Paul define “sexual immorality”? How, from his perspective, should we “control” our sexual desires “in a way that is holy and honorable”? The simplest way to say it is that for Paul, sexual immorality is a sexual relationship that takes place outside of the marriage between one man and one woman.

Note that Paul's wording assumes the presence of sexual desires; he doesn't say to deny, suppress, or defeat them. Instead, he tells us to do what almost everyone says we should do with them: he tells us to control them. The marriage relationship between a man and a woman represents the relationship between God and his people (Isaiah 54:5, Revelation 19:7). As such, sexual desire is not simply a desire to be physically satisfied; it is also a desire to know another person and, more than that, a desire to know God. Therefore, whether you're married or single, sexual desire should be channeled first into a relationship with God.

If you're married, also channel your sexual desires into a relationship with your spouse, sharing with God what's pleasing and what's difficult. If you're single and you rightly feel desire for a sexual relationship that is not possible, at least not yet, cry out to God. If a married person wants to have a sexual relationship with someone other than his or her spouse, he or she should learn to “control” such a desire. If a single person wants to have a sexual relationship with someone, he or she should learn to “control” such a desire. Each of us must “learn” to control sexual desires by channeling them in a way that is holy and honorable. Note, also, that failure is to be expected. If the Thessalonians had already mastered self-control, they wouldn't have had to learn it. We, too, must continue to learn.

If we were to ask how we are to go about controlling and channeling our sexual desires, we should note that in this text, pagans “who do not know God” control their bodies, yes, but in “passionate lust” that is far more indiscriminate. In contrast, we learn to control ourselves in the context of an intimate and honest relationship with God, “who gives you his Holy Spirit” so that you might draw near to him and receive strength from him. The “Holy” Spirit helps us control our bodies in a way that is “holy and honorable.” Again, if false worship results in sexual distortion and confusion, then true worship renews our sexuality according to the image of God. It should also be noted that God gives his Holy Spirit not only to each of us who believes in Jesus but also to the church as a whole. Therefore, we don't learn—indeed, we cannot learn—to control and channel our sexuality in isolation; we learn with the help of the Spirit-filled community. You don't just give in to every sexual desire; you learn to fight, and there is glory in the fight, not to mention intimacy with God and with others.

Paul motivates us to learn control in two ways. First, he says, if we simply give in to our sexual desires, we do harm not only to ourselves, as we dishonor our bodies, but also to others by taking advantage of them. If God has designed sex for a marriage relationship, then sex outside of marriage is damaging, even if so-called “consenting adults” can't see it. Second, Paul says, in so many words, God is watching. God cares about what we do, especially about what we do to others, especially what we do to each other in his family, and all of us will have to answer to him.

### The harmless hookup?

Sex, the source of so much delight, is also, in our broken world, the source of so much pain. Our world is filled with men and women who are “taking advantage” of others, from sex trafficking sexual abuse on one end to sex outside of marriage or the casual hookup on the other.

According to various academic studies, as many as 75 percent of undergraduates in the United States report having participated in the hookup culture. One college freshman describes a hookup this way: “There are no strings. You just do it, you’re done, and you can forget about it.” The point is simply to satisfy desires without forming an emotional bond with one’s partner. When I was in college (many years ago), a friend told me that for him, sex was simply recreation. Really? Recreation? Yes, recreation.

Recent research, however, indicates that the harmless hookup may not be so harmless after all. Donna Freitas, author of the book *The End of Sex*, surveyed thousands of undergraduates and discovered that many students—men and women alike—are deeply unhappy with the hookup culture. Hooking up offers an immediate substitute for the relationships and romance that young people admit they want but without the constraints and sacrifices that authentic relationships require. Although students tend to accept hooking up as an unavoidable part of college life, meaningless hookups have led them to associate sexuality with ambivalence, boredom, isolation, and loneliness.<sup>2</sup>

We should not expect those who “do not know God” as he is revealed in the Scriptures to adhere to the sexual ethics espoused by the Scriptures. Those of us who know God, however, must learn to embrace and live with this powerful gift. Worship God, and pour out your heart to him. Find a safe small group of men or women with whom to share. Learn to control and channel your desires. Be renewed as a man; be renewed as a woman.

As we worship the true God, we are not only renewed in our sexuality, we also learn to honor the image of God in other humans, especially those in the family of God.

## Restoration of relationships

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10:

**<sup>9</sup>Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. <sup>10</sup>And in fact, you do love all of God’s family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more . . .**

The word in verse 9 translated “one another” would be better translated “brothers and sisters”—meaning, brothers and sisters in Christ. The first family in the biblical story came undone because of jealousy and murder. The new family that the gospel forms, however, is characterized by love for one another. Paul notes that the Thessalonians

have been taught directly by God, evidently by the Holy Spirit, to love each other regardless of their differences. The prophet Isaiah, when he envisioned the new age, predicted, “All your children will be taught by the Lord” (Isaiah 54:13). The new age dawned with the death, resurrection, and ascension/enthronement of Jesus Christ, and with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that a distinguishing characteristic of his followers would be their love for one another: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 14:35). If we love each other, we give evidence of the gospel to those who don’t yet believe it. Indeed, a concern for the reputation of the gospel is in view in the context of Paul’s letter, for he wants the Thessalonians to “win the respect of outsiders” (verse 12).

Love for others in the family of God has particularly shown up in the hospitality that the Thessalonians have extended to those who have come to their city from throughout Macedonia. Still, Paul doesn’t want them to rest on their laurels, so to speak, but to “do more and more.” In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he commands them to literally “pursue” hospitality (Romans 12:13). (See my message *The Value of Each*: <http://www.pbc.org/messages/the-value-of-each>.)

For many of us in the church, it’s especially challenging to reach out to unbelievers. Let’s not forsake that challenge, but at the same time there is something we can do, for the sake of the gospel and even for the sake of evangelism, if we are to believe the words of Jesus, that may be less challenging for many of us: we can be hospitable to visitors and newcomers. We can be a welcoming community. We already are extending a welcoming hand, but as Paul might say, “we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more.” Be sensitive to someone you don’t recognize. Be on the lookout for visitors and newcomers. Introduce yourself. Open your home and your small group to visitors and newcomers. In a world that is growing increasingly inhospitable, we have a great opportunity.

We regularly host lunches for newcomers to our church, and virtually all of those who attend them tell us they are looking for a smaller community within our community. Let’s all be on the lookout for such people and look for ways to include them.

We have a wonderful Visitation Ministry, led by George and Blossom Abraham, that anyone can participate in. If you’re interested, contact them at [gmabraham@yahoo.com](mailto:gmabraham@yahoo.com). Also, people in our church regularly host visitors to our area, many of whom come for surgical procedures at Stanford Hospital. If you’re interested in this ministry,

contact Kathy Means at [kathy\\_means@pbc.org](mailto:kathy_means@pbc.org). In our context, doing “more and more” might involve getting more and more people involved in these and other wonderful ministries.

When we love one another in the family of God and especially as we extend hospitality to one another, we refuse to be a part of the sordid human tale of relational tension and violence. Instead, we honor the image of God in men and women.

First, remember the past. Second, live in the present. Finally, anticipate the future.

## Anticipating the future

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11:

**<sup>1</sup>Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup>for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**

**<sup>4</sup>But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup>You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. <sup>7</sup>For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. <sup>9</sup>For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup>He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**

The gospel, the good news of God’s victory over evil, features not only salvation but also judgment, thank God. The gospel reveals not only God’s righteousness but also his wrath (Romans 1:17-18). His righteousness, in fact, cannot be separated from his wrath. The psalmists and the prophets expected God, in his righteousness, to rescue his people by inflicting his wrath on his enemies, who were oppressing his people. God, in his wrath,

opposes wickedness. If he didn’t, he would stand accused of sanctioning it. If we get a little squeamish about the wrath of God, we might want to ask ourselves whether we want to live forever in a world in which evil has not been vanquished. People who live in cultures in which evil goes unchecked will tell you they live in something like hell. If we want evil to be overthrown once and for all, then we can give thanks for God’s judgment and wrath.

One day, the final “day of the Lord,” the Lord Jesus Christ will return to consummate his reign, vanquish evil, and establish his eternal kingdom. Some, those who don’t believe the gospel, will be unprepared for that day, Paul says. They are living in the dark, so to speak—willfully so, for they want to decide for themselves what to do instead of submitting to the Lord. If, in the back of their minds, they wonder whether there’s a judgment to face, they think, perhaps, that God will give everyone a pass, or at least they think that God will give them a pass in view of the way they have lived their lives. They will be sorry to learn that God doesn’t care about so-called good deeds; he cares about good deeds that proceed from faith in his Son.

If we were to ask Paul what fate awaits those who choose against Christ, he might answer from his most explicit text concerning the subject “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed” (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

Ah, Paul tells the Thessalonians, and, by extension, those of us who also believe the gospel, you have every reason for being prepared for the day of the Lord. Those who believe the gospel are “children of the light and children of the day.” With the coming of Christ and the Spirit, the new age has dawned, so that we who follow Jesus now live, at least to some degree, the life of the future in the present, in anticipation of the full day.

Therefore, because the full day is coming, what do we do now, in the morning? We get ready for war. But it’s a different kind of war, for we put on “faith and love as a breastplate” and “the hope of salvation as a helmet.” Christ, in his death and resurrection, has already defeated evil, and we, by the Holy Spirit, implement his victory, working and praying to bring his healing love to the world until the day of the Lord, when it finally and completely overtakes the world. We take on evil not least through faith, by believing the gospel; through love, by caring for people in practical ways; and through hope, knowing that a better future is coming and that we are, in fact, contributing to that better future.

Yes, we live the life of the future in the present, for Paul says that based on Christ's death, we "live together with him" regardless of whether we are "awake or asleep," whether we are alive or dead. We as individuals not only live with Christ; we as his people, together, as a community, live with him. We do now, albeit imperfectly, what we will be doing fully and eternally, when Christ consummates his reign. If we are looking for a summary definition of what life in the new creation will be like (our consideration of the book Revelation will give us a more comprehensive view), we could not improve upon Paul's contention that we, as the people of God, will "live together with him"—that is, with Christ.

If the contemporary phenomenon of social media proves anything, it proves that we are social creatures. An astounding 1.06 billion people actively use Facebook, more than one-seventh of the world's population. We all want friends. Yes, we're social creatures, but we're broken social creatures. Social media not only scratch a relational itch, they also expose relational brokenness. In the new creation, however, we won't be inventing words such as "sexting" or "cyberbullying" to describe how people dishonor their bodies and take advantage of others. No teenage girl will pass out drunk and suffer sexual abuse at the hands of classmates who then have the audacity to circulate digital photos of their handiwork among friends (as was the case last year with some Saratoga High School students. The girl later committed suicide.)

No, we will live together with Jesus. Thank God!

## Remember, live, dream

The gospel, which came to us in the past by the power of the Spirit, takes us, in a sense, all the way back to the beginning of humanity. God created humans, male and female, as sexual beings, but sin wreaked havoc with our sexuality. God created us to live in blissful harmony with one another, but sin also wreaked havoc with our relationships. The gospel not only takes us back to the beginning of creation, it also points us forward to the new creation, where we will live together with Jesus, the Lord of creation.

Jay Gatsby, of course, failed in his quest to re-create the past. Instead, he created a tragedy. The Holy Spirit is with us in the present, "the only time life is alive," reminding us of the past, pointing us toward the future, renewing us

as humans, helping us to channel our sexual desires and helping us to pursue hospitality in anticipation of the day of the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Remember: The gospel came to you with power.

Dream: We will live together with Jesus.

Remember and Dream: Let your memory and your dreams converge so that you might live, really live, in the sacred, wondrous present. The new age has dawned, and we are children of the day.

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup>F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 111.

<sup>2</sup>Donna Freitas, *The End of Sex* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>John Leax, *Grace is Where I Live* (LaPorte, Indiana: WordFarm, 2004), 26.